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**ETHIOPIA**

## **Launch of the Pastoralist Areas Resiliency Improvement through Market Expansion (PRIME) Project**

### **REMARKS BY DENNIS WELLER, MISSION DIRECTOR**

**Addis Ababa, December 18, 2012**

I am greatly honored to be here today to launch USAID Ethiopia's flagship program for pastoral Ethiopia called "Pastoralist Areas Resiliency Improvement through Market Expansion" known by its acronym PRIME. The word "prime" means to catalyze. We aim to catalyze improvements in the livelihoods of pastoral peoples, including the women who play critical economic and social roles in the wellbeing of families and communities; we aim to catalyze livestock production and markets, and to catalyze the ability of those populations most vulnerable to climate change to adapt and respond without undue suffering. The launch of this project comes as USAID Administrator Rajiv Shah launched, on December 3, agency-wide, a new policy and programming for affected regions of East and West Africa called "Building Resilience to Recurrent Crises."

So it is that USAID, learning from years of experience and drawing on the resources of two U.S. presidential initiatives for food security and nutrition ("Feed the Future") and for adaptation to climate change, is today here in Ethiopia launching a multi-intervention and comprehensive approach to help pastoral areas achieve viable and sustainable livelihoods and contribute to the overall growth and transformation of Ethiopia. Today, with the launch of PRIME, we renew our commitment to our partners in government and civil society in Afar, Oromia and Somali regions.

Over the past decade, USAID has invested over \$40 million U.S. dollars in pastoralist's livelihoods programs. This experience has informed the design of PRIME which will operate for five years and target 250,000 households and represents a contribution from the American people of roughly \$52 million U.S. dollars, including over \$4 million specifically for improved nutrition.

In 2011, the drought in the Horn of Africa region affected many countries including the pastoralist areas of Ethiopia. Under the leadership of the Government of Ethiopia, USAID and development partners, responded to save lives. Our former USAID pastoral livelihoods projects led by Save the Children and Mercy Corps implemented a series of emergency interventions using a so-called 'crisis modifier' approach designed to protect assets so that people do not fall back into poverty during times of climatic shocks or other emergencies.

Through this crisis modifier approach, USAID and implementing partners conducted commercial destocking, animal feed interventions, animal health care, and water interventions amongst others. We learned a lot. For example, we've found that commercial de-stocking — helping families sell livestock ahead of a drought — has a benefit to cost ratio of 40:1 rather than waiting until after a drought plagues a region. Fodder interventions — basically ensuring that the right animals get the right food at the right time — preserve these livelihood assets.

Since that terrible drought, a series of debates and discussions have taken place in and around the countries of the Horn of Africa. The Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD), Heads of State and Governments, under the leadership of the late Prime Minister Meles Zenawi, met in Nairobi, Kenya and agreed to end drought emergencies through an initiative called “Drought Resilience and Growth in the Horn of Africa.” USAID and other donors and NGOs are supporting the goals of this initiative in many ways and programs such as PRIME will contribute from its experience to this regional initiative.

In Ethiopia, the Government, led by the Ministry of Agriculture, has developed a country program that integrates and includes six core elements in the areas of natural resource management, market access and trade, livelihoods and basic services, research and technology, conflict and peace building. PRIME is designed to support this integrated and comprehensive approach and interventions in all six areas.

While drought-stricken areas receive lots of media coverage and attention during a crisis, the significant economic potential of these areas is largely overlooked. For example, evidence shows that pastoral areas have high livestock potential and over 90% of Ethiopian livestock and meat exports are sourced from these areas in addition to the informal livestock trade.

The Government of Ethiopia has set an ambitious Growth and Transformation Plan (GTP) target to triple revenue from meat and livestock exports to reach \$1 billion. USAID, through the recently launched AGP-Livestock Market Development project as well as the PRIME project, is working to open up the untapped opportunities in this sector and, ultimately, to help improve pastoralist incomes and enhance their livelihoods.

While we cannot stop shocks such as droughts from happening, USAID is committed to do more to help people prepare for and withstand them. The Agency has been at the vanguard of international efforts to build resilience to recurrent crisis in support of effective country-led plans and in partnership with the international community.

The ultimate goal is to transition away, in time, from reliance on humanitarian and emergency assistance by investing in more cost-effective and sustainable development activities. This approach can provide long-term management of the effects of crises, recurring more frequently with climate change, and which often provoke conflict.

USAID and our PRIME development partners will work closely with the Government of Ethiopia, and the Ministry of Agriculture in particular, on the issue of resilience building in these areas by creating economic opportunities through long term investments, by promoting measures to mitigate and adapt to climate change, and by helping those pastoralists who do not have viably commercial livestock operations to transition to other sustainable livelihoods.

So today it is a source of great pride for me to launch USAID Ethiopia’s PRIME project in cooperation with lead implementing partner Mercy Corps, and local partners operating in Afar, Oromia, and Somali regions. We will work closely with regional governments and with community leaders in all these areas to support the objective of increasing resilience in pastoralist areas as articulated in the Government of Ethiopia’s Country Program Paper.

Finally, USAID is especially pleased that local partners from Pastoralist Concern in southern Somali region, Aged and Children's Pastoralist Association in northern Somali region, SOS Sahel in Borena, Afar Integrated Sustainable Development Association, and Haramaya University will help us bring attention to and develop the vast potential of overlooked and underserved areas too long identified with crises. As you begin implementation, USAID is committed to work with you all to ensure the project achieve lasting impact and results for the proud peoples of all these areas.

Thank you.